National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior

Mojave NPres
Date: 03/01/2010

Categorical Exclusion Form

Project: **SUP-Southern California Edison Deteriorated Pole Replacements 2010**
Project Number: **10-moja-009/PEPC 29451**

Project Description:
Messeret Yilma (Southern California Edison) has applied for a special use permit for Southern California Edison to replace deteriorated poles in Mojave National Preserve. These poles follow SCE's Marl Circuit, and Nipton Circuit. SCE representatives met with Mojave National Preserve staff on November 10, 2009 in Barstow, CA. This request follows up on discussions from that meeting.

The poles to be replaced fall under three rights-of-way grants originally issued to SCE by the Bureau of Land Management: R-98 (November 7, 1966), CA-18767 (March 3, 1986), and LA-0167149 (January 16, 1967).

SCE crews will access these poles from existing rights-of-way access roads; no new access will be created. Deteriorated poles will be removed in their entirety from Mojave National Preserve and disposed of by SCE. Replacement poles will be transported by hand or helicopter to project sites. Replacement poles will be placed in the old hole, if possible; if not, they will be placed within one foot (12") of the old hole. Digging will be done by hand; setting will be done either by hand or helicopter.

Work crews of six people will operate two line trucks plus one smaller truck at each location. Biological and/or archeological monitors will travel in separate vehicles.

A helicopter may be needed if the deteriorated pole is located away from an existing access road. The pole will be cut and removed by hand, then transported by helicopter. The helicopter will also transport new poles to these less accessible locations. SCE work does not require helicopter landings.

The SCE crew will use existing ROW access roads, where possible, for staging their equipment, materials, and vehicles. If other staging areas are required, SCE will consult with Mojave National Preserve to identify appropriate locations, and will notify park staff prior to using such areas.

Project Location:

County:	San Bernardino	State:	CA
Location 1 District: Geo. Marker:	 T 12N, R12E, SB (Subsection)	 Section: Other:	 7 SCE Marl Circuit
Location 2 District: Geo. Marker:	 T15N, R10E, SBM (Subsection)	 Section: Other:	 13 SCE Nipton Circuit
Location 3 District: Geo. Marker:	 T15 1/2N, R15E, (Subsection)	 Section: Other:	 21 SCE Nipton Circuit
Location 4 District: Geo. Marker:	 T16N, R15E, SBM (Subsection)	 Section: Other:	 22 SCE Nipton Circuit

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Location 5 District: Geo. Marker:	T12N, R12E, SBM (Subsection)	Section: Other:	7 SCE Marl Circuit
Location 6 District: Geo. Marker:	T15 1/2N, R15E (Subsection)	Section: Other:	22 SCE Nipton Circuit
Location 7 District: Geo. Marker:	T20N, R7E, SBM (Subsection)	Section: Other:	9 SCE Nipton Circuit
Location 8 District: Geo. Marker:	T12N, R12E, SBM (Subsection)	Section: Other:	 SCE Marl Circuit
Location 9 District: Geo. Marker:	T11N, R12E, SBM (Subsection)	Section: Other:	 SCE Marl Circuit
Location 10 District: Geo. Marker:	T11N, R11E, SBM (Subsection)	Section: Other:	 SCE Marl Circuit
Location 11 District: Geo. Marker:	T12N, R11E, SBM (Subsection)	Section: Other:	 SCE Marl Circuit

Mitigation(s):

- **Project implementation must be monitored two or more times per week, depending Southern California Edison's compliance with the conditions of the permit. Monitors should meet with SCE's biologists to discuss tortoise observations.**
- **Soil disturbance is to kept to a minimum, to avoid germination and growth of non-native and/or invasive plants. If new holes are dug for pole placement, the disturbed soils should be used to fill in holes where old poles are removed to the maximum extent possible.**
- **SCE must submit to Mojave National Preserve a list of biologists for authorization to monitor. Construction will not start until an adequate number of biologists have been authorized to monitor desert tortoises.**
- **SCE must provide an authorized biologist on-site at all times during construction. The biologist must be available to discuss construction progress and desert tortoise observational information with NPS monitors at any time during the project.**
- **SCE must report desert tortoise observations within 24 hours to Mojave National Preserve. Contact: Danette Woo, (760) 252-6107, danette_woo@nps.gov.**
- **Permission for the requested work to be carried out is to be limited to times of the year when the desert tortoise is less active. It is most active in the spring (March-June) and fall (September-October) months. The tortoise is less active from late June through August, and tends to be dormant between November and February. Construction must be limited to these periods when tortoises are less active.**
- **SCE or its contractor needs to notify Park Fire and Aviation Officer Chuck Heard of any aviation activities within park boundaries up to 48 hours prior to work starting. The park will provide a representative to SCE or its contractor to assist meeting DOI Aviation Safety practices. For more information SCE or its contractor can either contact Chuck Heard or Clay Hillan (NPS PW Aviation Manager) at 360 253-3086 or Clay_Hillin@nps.gov.**

Describe the category used to exclude action from further NEPA analysis and indicate the number of the category (see Section 3-4 of DO-12):

C.12 Upgrading or adding new overhead utility facilities to existing poles, or replacement poles which do not change existing pole line configurations.

Mojave National Preserve has completed an interdisciplinary review of the proposed action. Concerns were expressed with regard to Southern California Edison's previous desert tortoise monitoring. Reviewers have suggested this pole replacement work be permitted when desert tortoises are not active above ground, that Mojave National Preserve monitor SCE's work more closely and more frequently, and that SCE be required to report desert tortoise observations when they occur. Authorization of tortoise biologists must be completed before a permit may be issued. Soil disturbance must be minimized and soils kept within the site location to avoid the spread of non-natives and/or invasive plant species. For helicopter use, SCE must first contact Mojave's Fire and Aviation Officer or the Pacific West Region's Aviation Manager. Further instructions are listed in the list of mitigations above. These mitigations apply both to this request and a second SCE request (10-moja-016/PEPC #30188).

Reviewers did not identify any other concerns with regard to natural and cultural resources. Southern California Edison must closely abide by the mitigations listed herein to avoid and/or minimize significant adverse impacts to the natural and cultural resources of Mojave National Preserve. Under this assumption, impairment will not result from the implementation of this project. A special use permit may be issued to Southern California Edison to replace the poles listed in SCE's request. The permit's special park conditions must include all mitigations listed herein, in addition to the park's minimum conditions regarding desert tortoise protections for construction projects, wilderness character, and other standard conditions.

On the basis of the environmental impact information in the statutory compliance file, with which I am familiar, I am categorically excluding the described project from further NEPA analysis. No exceptional circumstances or conditions in Section 3-6 apply, and the action is fully described in Section 3-4 of DO-12.

Park Superintendent/ DENNIS SCHRAMM/ Lawrence J. Wilson

Date: 3/8/10

NPS Contact Person: DANETTE WOO/

Title: Environmental Compliance Specialist

Telephone number: (760) 252-6107